

A True and Perfect
NARRATIVE

Of the late Dreadful

F A M I N E

In the great and populous City of

M E S S I N A in the *S T R A I T S*,

Where vast Multitudes of Men, Women, and Children, have Miserably Perished in the Streets, for want of Food; and those that Survived, were forced to go many Days without Bread, Feeding only on Horses, Mules, Cats, Dogs, Leather, Hides, taken out of the Tan-sats, Vermine, &c.

W I T H

A Description of the Place, the occasions and manner of their Revolting last Summer from *Spain*, and putting themselves under the Protection of the Crown of *France*, and a Journal of all Considerable Actions, performed there since their present troubles.

Extracted from several Letters, from *Milan*, *Naples*, and *Palermo*.

L O N D O N Printed 1674.

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*An account of the Troubles and Terrible Famine
at Messina.*

Messina is an eminent City of Sicily, a great Island (Seven hundred Miles in Compass) which lies in the Mediterranean Sea, supposed to have formerly been joyned to Italy, and Divided by the fury of the Waves, the Fretum or narrow Sea between them being not above a Mile or half broad, in which, Charybdis a Gulf or Whirlpool being on the one side, and the Rock Scylla just opposite on the other, the dangerous passage for unskilful Mariners, occasion'd that their Proverb, whereby we say, when a man knows not which way to turn him, he is between Scylla and Carrybdis. In this Island Polyphemus and all the Cyclops dwell, here is the Hill Hybla so famous for Bees and Honey, here is Likewise the Hill Aetna (now called Mount Vesuvius) which continually Belches forth flames of Fire to the amazement of all beholders, and lastly to this mathematick Learning is more beholding than to Athens, Rome or any other place, Euclide and Archimedes the two Pillars of that Art, being both born and flourish'd here.

The

The People are Ingenious, Eloquent and pleasant, but wicthal wondrous Inconstant, and no less talkative whence *Guerra sicula* becomes Litine, for old wives Fables, they follow the Romish Religion, and use the Italian Language, but very much inspired and fallen from its true Elegancy by reason of the Commixture of the Greek, Saracen, Norman, Spanish and French Tongues, the Soil is incredibly fruitful in Wine, Oyle, Honey, Sugar, &c. such abundance of all sorts of Grain, that it was of old Counted the Granary of the whole Roman Empire, to which usual plenty to which they were accustomed, must needs make the Pinchings of Famine so much the more sensibly resented by the poor inhabitants at *Messina* During their late extremity of war.

About 70000 the People being lamentably afflicted and oppressed by great Taxes, Impositions, Gabels and Excise laid on all kind of Commodities, especially on Meat and Drink and the necessary Provisions of Life, and suffering several other Grievances, the the whole Mind was filled with Murmurs and Complaints, but no place more than this *Messina* a very Large and Populous City, Situate just opposite to *Rhene* in *Italy* whose Haven and Entrance are so strongly sconced, and Bullwarked, that they used Commonly to let their Gates in distrust of the Turks, stand continually open, the People here pretended at least to have received many intolerable abuses and oppressions from their Covardious Government at last occasioned a General Murdery and sack of the wherein they beheaded their *Stras* of *Supremacy* *Messina*



gistrate in the Palace Royal and on the third of *August 1674* S. N. having caused a Mine to be sprung, by which a great part of the said Palace was thrown to the Ground, and by other Means reduced him to the utmost Extremity, so that it was impossible for him longer to defend himself, he submitted to a Capitulation, and yielded the place and retired to the Castle of *Salvadore*, but not thinking himself safe there, he Embarked for *Melara* to confer with the Marquess of *Bayn* than Vice-roy of *Sicily* about reducing that City to its duty, whose inhabitants in the meantime, taking the supreme power into their own hands, took from the several orders of the religious within their precincts, all their Plate and Coyned it into money, made incursions into the adjacent Country, and brought all within 16 Leagues of their City under their jurisdiction, sent several deputies into Foreign parts to sollicite succours, and buy Powder and other Ammunition, and having an Implacable hatred against the Family of the *Marly* caused one Hundred and sixty Persons of that Race to be executed, and amongst them 3 Women who were beheaded, and a Gentleman of the Family of *Poverde*, in this exigence of affairs the Vice-roy there, as likewise the Duke of *Naples* and *Milan* used all diligence to raise Forces to Reduce them to obedience.

The Pope was solicited to aid the Crown of *Spain* with his Gallies, but his holiness avoided it with a Complacency, to assist the great Duke of *Savoy* and the Duke of *Orleans*, but the Republick of *Genoa* seemed

seemed for a while inclinable to yeild assistance, as
 long as the Rebells pretended a Respect and alleigance
 to *Spain* and that their aim was only a redress of grie-
 vances and a restraint of the Insolent Exorbitances of
 their Magistrates, but soon after they had offered sub-
 jection to the French King, and that he had taken them
 into his protection, that state (fearing to disoblige his
 most Christian Majesty who was but newly reconcil-
 ed to them by the mediation of his Majesty of great
Britain) recalled their Gallies home, however 2000.
 foot being sent from *Naples* with other forces, the
Vice-Roy endeavoured to block them up by land, who
 in the mean time had made themselves Masters of the
 Castle of *Salvadore* and several other strong Forts, and
 grew more extravagant in their demands then before,
 relying much on the Succours that were sent them
 from *Marseilles* and *Tholon*, at last the Spanish Armada
 consisting of several Gallies and men of War, being
 got to sea and lying before the mouth of their Haven
 and his Catholick Majesties forces, on shore hin-
 dring all entercourse so that no provision could be
 brought them by land, and they themselves being
 very numerous, this City of *Messina* and its territo-
 ries being estimated to conteyn near one hundred
 thousand Souls, all kind of food began to grow
 very scarce, having no store houses prepared before
 hand, which obliged them to send out great numbers
 of the more aged weak and poorest people to seeke
 their fortune amongst their enemies; in this strait
 things stood with them most part of this winter, and
 the Hardships they endured are almost inexpressible;

'tis certain there is no enemy so terrible as the belly unsatisfied, nor any torment like Famine, to see the meager looks of so many thousand people half-famished walking the streets like so many ghosts or frightful Apparitions, to hear the sad cries and dismal complaints of Men Women and Children ready to perish for want of Bread, must certainly be an object of pittie enough to affect the most obdurate heart; all kind of usual meat was wasted, herbs and roots, devoured not out of a wanton delicacy as before, but for pure necessity. At last they sell to kill their Horses and mules dressing their Dogs and Cooking their Cats, and those nice Stomacks that within these Twelve-moneths were wont to ransack the elements to gratify the Luxury of their insatiate palates and scarce thought any thing that Earth or water or air could yeild, daintie enough to please their Appetite, could now with a ravenous delight feed on a peice of Carrion, and esteeme a dish of Rats and Mice a most relishing repast, nay would have thought themselves happy if they could but have had their Bellies full of such Cheer. For by a severe order every man was stinted his Quantity how much he should eat in a day, which it was death for him to exceed, to such an extremity of wants they were reduced that they Commonly Eat leather, and Hydes, even after they had lain a long time in the tan fats, and even this wretched fare was so scarce that there was not above an ounce and an half or two ounces at most afforded for a man or Woman for a whole day; In this deplorable case they Continued a considerable time, having
nothing

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nothing to live upon but hope, which being it self now grown almost helpless, was at last answered with releif: For on the 11th of *February* last past, The duke of *Vivonne* coming up with nine ships under his Command, within sight of the *Cape del Fare*, designed to carry them provision, the Spanish *Armada* consisting of 20. men of war and 16. Gallies lying along the coast of *Calabria* and being resolved to hinder such their designe weighed anchor, and fell upon the French with great fury, who notwithstanding the disadvantage of number bravely defended themselves till noon, at which time 5. more fresh men of war came into their Assistance, and in fine after a sharp and obstinate dispute, which Continued from Eight a clock in the morning till an hower after Sun set, the French having got the weather gage, the Spaniards thought fit to sheer off, and standing away towards *Naples*, left the French to prosecute their Voyage, who soon after Arrived at *Messina* with great quantities of Corn and other necessary Provisions to the infinite Joy of the languishing Inhabitants.



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